"Bulletin" reflections

by PAT HAWKER, G3VA

Volume 1 Number 1 of the *T & R Bulletin* was published in July 1925. Now 50 years and 600 issues later we trace just a little of its long continuous story, covering a period which has seen the hobby grow from around 1,000 experimental transmitters in 1925 to the over-20,000 British amateurs of today. For some it is hoped this account may bring back memories; for others it may serve as a reminder that even in these days of solid-state and satellite repeaters many of the ideals, the requirements, the problems and the practices of the amateur transmitter remain remarkably the same. Inevitably this is a personal story that omits much, but it is written as a grateful and frank tribute to a journal that has seemed part of the author's life for just on 40 years.

BIRTH OF THE "BULL"

By 1925 the first heady excitement of short-wave dx was over, transmitters (mostly single-stage power oscillators) and Schnell and Reinartz "straight" receivers had been made to work down to 23m; spark had been superseded; broadcasting was pushing British amateurs off 440m; aircraft communications had taken over 1,000m. Daylight dx had come with the opening of the short waves; the Radio Transmitters Society had fused with the Transmitter & Relay Section (the active transmitting group within the still prestigious, but not always effective, Radio Society of Great Britain, then concerned with many aspects of "wireless"). Radio amateurs were divided into two rival groups—the "giants" of the recent dawn of international dx and those who had helped pioneer broadcasting in Britain by phone and music transmissions on medium waves.

Until 1925 *Wireless World* had been the official journal of the Society, providing generous coverage of meetings and activities; occasionally with papers reprinted as *Proceedings of the RSGB*. There had been no regular Society publications. As interest increased in broadcasting reception, the commercial publications gradually devoted less space to transmitting topics. Several of the early British amateurs looked wistfully across the Atlantic and felt the lack of an exclusively amateur radio periodical, but (as in many other matters) it was left to Gerry Marcuse, 2NM, to make the first move.

In 1924 he wrote a letter to the editor of *Wireless World*: "Considerable dissatisfaction seems to exist in the minds of various members, the causes of which appear to vary, but the feeling is, I believe, that we require a periodical of our own, similar to *QST*."

Even then, no immediate action resulted and the idea might have lapsed had there not been a change of ownership of *Wireless World* in February 1925 (a change that arose out of the journal's support for international working by British amateurs when, in 1924, the Government attempted to close this down—but that is another story).

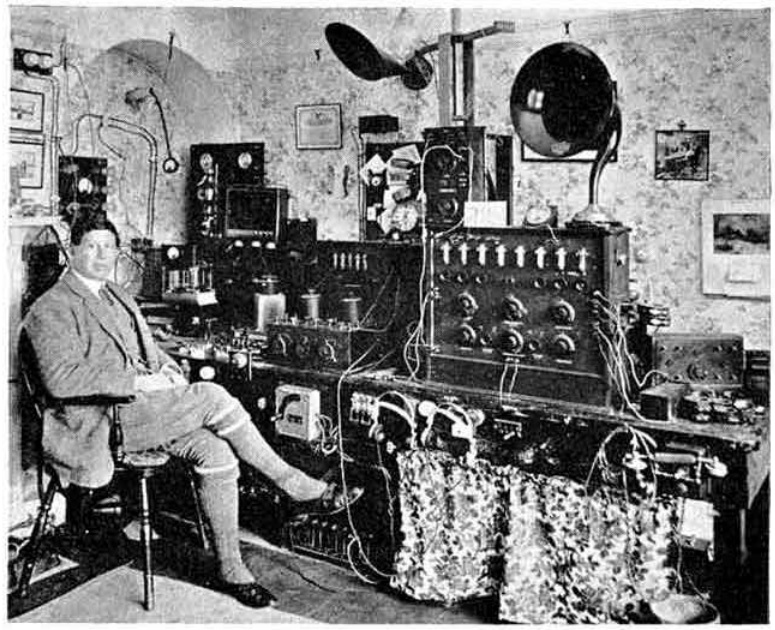
The new owners were reluctant to continue the official association with the RSGB and it was arranged that instead *Experimental Wireless* would become the Society's journal. This was a magazine edited by Paul Tyers, 5GX, which had supported amateur radio since the first issue in 1923, particularly the "more serious experimenters". But it had never minded chastising in print those "who never perform any experimental work, who buy their sets ready made, who usually know no morse whatever, and who are best known for the great number of gramophone records which they send." Although many amateurs wrote for *Experimental Wireless*, it is doubtful whether it enjoyed the same support as *Wireless World*, so the proposed change brought to the fore the dilemma facing the T & R Section. Out-of-London members were already complaining that they received little in return for their subscriptions.

So by 1925 Gerry Marcuse and H. Bevan Swift, 2TI, then chairman of the T & R Section, felt something must be done urgently if the British amateur movement was not to split up again, as it had done several times in the early 'twenties. Bevan Swift has described what happened: "With this thought in mind, we (2NM and himself) resorted to a Lyons teashop and over a cup of coffee discussed what could be done. If we could only issue a bulletin, say once a month, detailing the activities of the section, it would give the provincial membership some satisfaction. The original idea was a simple four-page leaflet without advertisements.

"A rough draft was prepared and taken to a committee meeting of the section who immediately approved the idea and suggested that instead of a leaflet an actual magazine should be issued. As the committee was unable to embark on this expenditure itself, the matter had to go before the main RSGB Council for sanction. Here the proposal received only lukewarm support, because of the alternative arrangements with *Wireless World* and *Experimental Wireless*. The T & R Section committee decided to go ahead with the *Bulletin* and to shoulder the expense as best they could. To lighten the burden it was resolved to include a few advertisements; Arthur Hambling, 2MK, was able to approach the radio trade for advertising. J. A. J. Cooper, ex-5TR, was the first editor and with Bevan Swift, Gerry Marcuse and Ralph Royle, 2WJ, made up the first editorial committee.

"Vol 1 No 1 was hailed with general approval . . . some wanted a *Bulletin* every week and twice the size."

The first 12-page issue, of which nearly five pages were filled with advertisements, included a description of a single-stage 23m transmitter by Ralph Royle, 2WJ. The components were mounted on a wooden baseboard; there was a



The equipment used by Gerald Marcuse, G2NM, at Caterham, Surrey, during January 1924. From this station he made the first two-way contact on short waves with the west coast of the USA and maintained contact for some weeks with the Rice-Hamilton Expedition to South America

home-made blocking capacitor made of zinc sheets separated by photographic plates; the large single valve was mounted in a wooden supporting frame; the power supply used "chemical rectification" from the mains. Another article described a new "tetrodyne" superhet mixer using a four-electrode valve; there were many humorous asides which depended on the close-knit nature of the early amateurs. The *T & R Bulletin* was off to a promising start.

One result was a large increase in membership of the T & R Section which soon outgrew in size the main body of the RSGB; since members of the section were not automatically members of the main Society the anomaly led to a drastic re-organization of the whole Society: the T & R Section as such ceased to exist and in fact became the controlling factor in the Society, but the name was retained for the journal until 1942.

As many have found, it is easier to start a magazine than to keep one going, but fortunately there was plenty of enthusiasm and an obvious willingness to lend a hand. G. W. Thomas, 5YK, took over the editorship when J. A. J. Cooper had to step down. Arthur Milne, 2MI, drew many hundreds of the early illustrations. Horace Freeman of Parr's Advertising took on the problem of obtaining advertisements. Members of the editorial committee seem to have been ready to take their jackets off and tackle every aspect of production. One of these was Jimmy Mathews, 6LL, the pioneer of transatlantic working on 28MHz in 1928, who has set up a remarkable record in having, as a member of successive editorial and technical committees, been actively concerned with the production of the *T & R Bulletin*, the *RSGB Bulletin* and *Radio Communication* until finally this year he took on the only slightly less active role of a "corresponding member".

Gradually in the early 'thirties the size of the *Bulletin* increased, more rapidly after John Clarricoats, G6CL, became the Society's full-time secretary in 1932, later secretary-editor and finally editor. If this is to be a factual account, then one must admit that "Clarry" could make enemies as well as friends. In his belief in the freemasonry of amateur radio, sometimes it seemed he was influenced as much by freemasonry as by amateur radio. But that having been said, it must equally be stressed that it was his remarkable energy and dedicated vision that in those early days converted what was still in many respects an amateur newsletter into a substantial publication of high repute. Perhaps only those with experience of publishing can appreciate just how much effort he must have put into those pre-war *Bulletins*, with the full-time help of Miss May Gadsden and the voluntary efforts of an enthusiastic group of members.

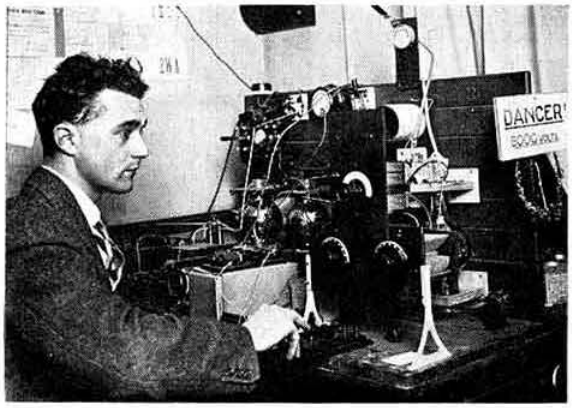
Later, in the stringent days of the second world war, he had the frustration of seeing the size fall back almost to its earliest levels with thin 16-page issues, but nevertheless an issue did appear each month, and the journal was for a time published from his home in Southgate.

GERRY MARCUSE AND EMPIRE BROADCASTING

We have noted how credit for the launching of the "*Bull*" belongs to Gerry Marcuse, Bevan Swift and the first small editorial committee. Marcuse, having conceived the idea, seems to have been willing to leave the implementation largely to others—hardly surprising in view of the enormous enthusiasm with which he pursued almost every branch of amateur activity and organization during the 'twenties.

One story, even though it is not directly connected with the *Bulletin*, is worth telling, if only to illustrate the spirit and resourcefulness of the early pioneers: the launching of Empire broadcasting by Marcuse in 1927.

This was on 32m which was at that time one of the favourite dx bands. For this was a period when amateurs picked for themselves 23, 33, 37, 43, 80, 110 and 160m for most of their operation. This was part of their inheritance based on the



The transmitting equipment of J. H. D. Ridley, G5NN, in South Norwood, London, about 1925 when he was one of the first amateurs to hear Mexican signals on 91m. But the 6,000V and large transmitting valves show that not all stations were low power. (Photo by courtesy of *Wireless World*)

original American licences of 1912 that gave amateurs unlimited access to "200 metres and down".

Marcuse was among the most successful of the small number of British amateurs who were in at the dawn of international dx. 2NM found that his telephony operation brought him correspondence from listeners who were overjoyed to hear a voice from the "mother country". This was in 1925-26 when there were no British broadcasting stations on short waves.

And so he began, with Post Office permission, a daily series of broadcasts directed to listeners in the British Empire. And these really were *programmes*. With his friends he organized concerts and song recitals, inviting many well-known musicians and singers to his home "Coombe Dingle" in Queens Park, Caterham, and to that of a friend, Percy Valentine, in whose home a studio and control room were set up; they even had a special Post Office distribution link between the two houses in the form of two telephone lines. Valentine's uncle was a conductor and occasionally there was a full orchestra packed into the studio. Once they organized an "All-Australian" concert with internationally-known talent. There were regular outside broadcasts and the song of thrushes and blackbirds was relayed from the garden. Marcuse was not supposed to re-broadcast the medium-wave BBC programmes but he often did this, and the high-spot was his regular re-transmission of Big Ben, the first time these familiar sounds had ever been heard thousands of miles away via radio.

The Marconi Company let him have a Reisz microphone; Captain Mullard had his generator rewound when this blew up, and supplied enormous, football-sized power valves free of charge.

Marcuse had a fabulous site 700ft above sea level with a 100ft mast and Zepp aerial; he ran about 1·5kW on 32·5m and was regularly heard all over the world.

One of his first fan letters came from a lady in the West Indies. It was his lifelong claim that she wrote: "I am enchanted with your voice which I hear every Sunday morning. I have three lovely daughters and a flourishing business. If you would like to come over you can have the pick of the daughters and the business." Despite such alluring payola he remained in England.

His special Post Office licence permitted him to broadcast so many hours each week. Soon, many overseas stations (including those in Sydney, Ceylon, Singapore, India, New Zealand) were re-broadcasting his programmes on medium waves to local audiences.

These amateur broadcasts continued for about two years until in 1929, soon after the BBC had begun some experiments on G5SW at Chelmsford (it was not until 1932 that they launched the Empire Service), the Post Office told him to close down; his frequency was wanted. It had cost him some thousands of pounds out of his own pocket, but he had proved what he set out to show—that there was a demand for short-wave broadcasting from Britain. Marcuse remained an active amateur until his death at the age of 74 in 1961—a truly remarkable man who deserves to be remembered for many things, not least the foresight that British amateurs needed their own journal.

THE 'THIRTIES

It was in the years that ended with the cessation of amateur activities on 1 September 1939 that the "*Bull*" probably achieved its optimum balance and range, largely free of the economic and industrial problems that have beset post-war publishing. There were constructional articles; a constant flood of new information on aerials (some, including the "VS1AA", described first in its columns); vhf and microwaves; design trends; workshop notes by "Shack" (G6SN); book and "contemporary literature" reviews; Contact Bureau notes (later "Research and Experimental Section"); articles for newcomers by Austin Forsyth, G6FO, and later Jerry Walker, G5JU; social happenings and the annual convention (an annual highspot from 1926 to 1938); district notes; new members and new addresses; a monthly editorial by "Clarry"; the often pungent humour of "Uncle Tom" (L. H. Thomas, G6QB). There was a neat combination of fact and fantasy in such odes as:

> "Little Tommy put a shunt
> On his meter at the front,
> If he'd hidden it away,
> He'd still have had his call today."

This was in the days when although most British amateurs were officially limited to 10 or 25W input, some had permits up to 500W or so, and fooling the PO inspector became something of a legend. Was it really true that G2 -- had a low-power transmitter in his shack with a feeder passing (apparently) straight up through the attic wherein sat an enormous amplifier? Or that the trams in Cairo used to travel in fits and starts when SU1 -- keyed his rig?

It was, however, not all fun, frivolities and "baby broadcasters" (to use a then-common term of abuse). Dud Charman, G6CJ, was showing us how to get dx to order; the careful observations on 28MHz of Dennis Heightman, G6DH, have probably never been excelled (his identification of the nature of the "hiss phenomenon" remains one of the important amateur contributions to radio astronomy); H. A. M. Clark, G6OT, was giving advice on how to avoid tvi soon after the opening of "Ally Pally" in 1936.

Print and postage were cheap and quick. The lifting of

restrictions on American imports brought in a flood of Hallicrafters, National, Tobe-Deutschmann and RME receivers and the ubiquitous 6L6, T20 and T55 valves. Components such as variable capacitors, slow-motion dials, plug-in coils were readily available from Eddystone, Raymart, JB, Hamrad, Formo and others.

A note appeared under the heading "The Month on the Air" in September 1936: "The editor is considering introducing a new monthly feature which will contain interesting news items mainly concerning dx operation. Such a feature can only be prepared by a member who is regularly on the air . . ." To this invitation John Hunter, G2ZQ, (one of those who became a "Silent Key" in the war) responded, his first column suggesting that "the stumbling block for WAZ seems to be the zone including Tibet and the Lansu province of China and we would like to hear of any *authenticated*

During the 'thirties the equipment became a lot less crude than when the "Bulletin" began, but it was still very large as this photograph shows. In the foreground, Dud Charman, G6CJ, enters up the log

contacts . . ." The column was later taken over by H. A. M. Whyte, G6WY (VE3BWY) and then Arthur Milne, G2MI, who spanned the war years.

Amateurs were on 56MHz before the end of the 'twenties (16-mile contacts were being reported in 1925) but much of the early work used simple self-excited oscillators; a big step forward was a crystal-controlled transmitter described in the "*Bull*" in November 1935. An excellent account of uhf communication, including an experimental transmitter for 50cm, was written by Eric Megaw, of GX6MU fame, in July *1931*! Regular columns on 28 and 56MHz by Nell Corry, G2YL, Constance Hall, G8LY, and others were a feature of the middle and late 'thirties. All this with a membership gradually rising to almost 4,000 by 1939. The high level of *activity* of the period is shown by the 1938 "band occupancy" checks which revealed (over a few weekends) 1,698 different British calls out of a possible 2,500. In 1938 well over a thousand were regularly active on 7MHz alone. During the period 1933 to 1938 the number of licences doubled from 1,300 to 2,600. Of 2,705 licences in October 1938, 1,812 were for 10W, 503 for 25W. There were also 2,198 "artificial aerial" licences.

Many articles appeared in the "*Bull*" on the early history of the Society—a special 21st birthday number in June 1934 ran to some 80 pages including messages of congratulation from The Prince of Wales, Sir Oliver Lodge, Guglielmo Marconi, Dr W. H. Eccles, Sir Ian Fraser (Lord Fraser), Sir John Reith (Lord Reith) and many others. Both E. J. Simmonds, G2OD, and Gerry Marcuse, G2NM, contributed their own accounts of the pioneering of short waves. Or again, one remembers in other issues the very detailed account of "the dawn of international dx" by W. E. F. Corsham, G2UV, who took part in the original transatlantic tests, and accounts of early components by Stan Lewer, G6LJ.

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

Throughout the 'thirties, licence conditions in the UK remained virtually unchanged (except for the reduction of the unpopular "guard bands" at the edges of each band from 25kHz to 5kHz). To obtain a "radiating" permit (full licence, minimum age 16 years) it was necessary to pass a 12wpm morse test which could usually be taken in any town (plenty of operators then to be found in the Post Offices) and also to show intention "to conduct experiments of scientific value or public utility", licences being issued "only if the nature of the proposed experiments and other circumstances warrant that course". Many and strange were the applications composed to fulfil that requirement. Perhaps it was fortunate for many of us that once the experimental licence (there were no *amateur* licences at that time in the UK) was issued, the authorities seemed to lose interest in those "experiments"; though no British station was allowed to send "CQ" (we used "TEST" instead). "Artificial aerial" licences required no examinations but a full quota of birth certificates, references and the like.

Sometimes it seemed the Post Office engaged the applicant in a form of chess. The would-be amateur would submit a list of proposed experiments to improve transmitter design . . . the GPO would counter by declaring such experiments could be equally well carried out with an artificial aerial permit (which gave no right to radiate signals, merely to install or build transmitters). The frustrated applicant would consult one of the fortunate who had already obtained a licence, and together they would concoct a new thesis, this time bringing in some mention of aerials or propagation; with luck, the authority would relent and ask for "crystal certificates". If you sent only a certificate for 7MHz (doubling to 14MHz) you would get a 10W licence only for 7 and 14MHz; if you were astute enough to send also a 1·7MHz certificate, that band would be included (all other bands had to be applied for later); if you sent only a 1·7MHz certificate you got only 1·7MHz. To add 28 and 56MHz was fairly easy but 3·5MHz was difficult and the applicant had to have held a licence for at least one year. After six months, you could apply through the RSGB for a 25W permit. Higher-power permits meant that you had to dream up some more "experiments" that would justify them. The few old-timers with 500W permits were the subject of much envy. There is a classic story, again concerning 2NM, of how when his signals were picked up in Japan the Post Office (who wanted to establish a commercial circuit to that country) wrote asking him for details of the power and wavelength he was using, saying "if the limitations of your licence have been exceedeed steps will be taken, if possible, to amend the licence to regularize such tests". But that was in the 'twenties, not the more formal 'thirties!

During the 'thirties many of the more important technical developments were first applied to amateur work in the USA: this is hardly surprising since by the mid-'thirties there were already more than 50,000 *amateur* transmitters in the USA compared with under 2,000 *experimental* permits in the UK. James Lamb, W1CEI, introduced the concept of single-signal reception in 1932, putting a crystal filter in the i.f. amplifier: although his filter used a circuit developed in the UK by Dr Robinson for "stenode" reception. But the *Bulletin*, in 1939, was able to present an excellent and far-seeing series of articles by E. L. Gardiner, G6GR, (who had collaborated with Dr Robinson) on *band-pass* crystal filters. Valves were the speciality of D. N. Corfield, G5CD; book reviews were usually by Professor T. P. Allen, GI6YW. Associated publications began with *What Is Amateur Radio?* in 1932; followed by the first edition of *A Guide to Amateur Radio* in 1933, with annual editions until the appearance of the first edition of *The Amateur Radio Handbook* in 1938—240 pages and priced at 2s 6d (12½p). It was felt this was rather expensive for some prospective amateurs, so *The Helping Hand to Amateur Radio*, based on articles by Austin Forsyth, G6FO, was offered for the princely sum of 3d!

The capabilities of those pre-war amateurs should not be underestimated. After the introduction of Class B modulators in the early 'thirties, dx telephony became more consistent and led to such exploits as an all-continent round-table contact on 4 January 1938. Consider too the nine-element 28MHz rotary beam at GM6RG: six directors, driven element and two reflectors 48ft up, so sturdily constructed that the elements could be adjusted *in situ* from a gangway under the main boom: Brian Groom had this monster in use in 1938 at Galashiels.

Most of the present-day amateur contests were conceived in the 'thirties: NFD in 1933; BERU (initially a British Empire Radio Week) in 1931; top band, vhf and QRP contests were all popular, and fully reported in the "*Bull*".

Although the 0-V-1 "straight" receiver remained popular throughout the 'thirties for cw (I made my first VK contact with one in 1939) the period witnessed the great changeover to the superhet communications receiver. The HRO Senior was first marketed in 1936; National, Hammarlund, RME and the stream of low-priced Hallicrafters receivers were advertised in the "*Bull*" from about 1937. You could buy a Sky Buddy for £9 9s or a Sky Champion (with rf stage) for £15 15s, or a Super Skyrider for £32. These sets were imported by Webbs Radio, Eves Radio, Raymart, Premier and ACS. Tobe Deutschmann offered a good receiver kit, with excellent bandspread and triple-tuned i.f. transformers. Shortly before the war several British firms took up the challenge. Eddystone put their popular "All-world Two" to one side to bring out the ECR and later the 358 superhet receivers; there was a model by Evrizone (probably the first British receiver of this type, offered at £20) and the Peto Scott Trophy series.

In the early 'thirties, transmitting valves were a major problem and very costly for British amateurs. Large audio power triodes such as the PX25 were used, but they had high internal capacitances and it was not uncommon to find the old LS5 bright emitters still in use. Around 1936 the American "tubes" began to arrive: the "210" and 6L6 at about 8s 6d, the T20 at 17s 6d, the T40 at £1 4s and the 35T at £2 10s. Wonders indeed. The 807 (developed from the 6L6 about 1936) was seldom mentioned before the war. British companies brought out the ESW20 (direct equivalent to the T20 triode), and the RFP15 by the old "362" company became popular for suppressor grid modulation in 25W stations.

With coaxial cable virtually unknown, the Zepp and centre-fed dipole with open-wire lines or end-fed aerials were the most popular; the 84ft "W3EDP" enjoyed a vogue. The aerial wizards such as Dud Charman, G6CJ, talked of rhombics and W8JK driven arrays, delta matching and the importance of great circle maps. QSL cards could be bought at 1,000 for 10s from the "small ads".

WARTIME "BULLETINS"

So the 'thirties drew towards their climax. As one international crisis followed another the "*Bull*" increasingly included items about ARP, the newly-launched Civilian Wireless Reserve and its longer-established Royal Navy counterpart. Amateurs began turning up in unexpected places in unexpected roles. One read of the award of an MBE to "Tich" Emary, G5GH, for his work as a Foreign Office man in the Spanish Civil War—a foretaste perhaps of the many hundreds of amateurs who were sucked into the strange world of ULTRA and Y, double transposition and double-cross (XX), RSS and its VIs, the "Golf Club and Chess Society" at Bletchley, SCU with its farmyard and sense of discrimination, Special Forces, ISLD and Force 136, SOE and SIS. An odyssey that led one British amateur into the heart of the Netherlands' Bureau Inlichingen's secret communications network in a Dutch museum and waterworks. Although the Society was often the vital link that directly or indirectly put members in touch with such organizations, little of these activities appeared in the security-conscious columns of the wartime "*Bull*".

The blow had come suddenly but not unexpectedly. A notice in the *London Gazette* of Thursday 31 August 1939 proclaimed:

> "I, Major The Right Honourable George Clement Tyron His Majesty's Postmaster General hereby give notice that . . . all licences for the establishment of wireless telegraph sending and receiving stations for experimental purposes are hereby withdrawn."

Spot the "73" and the HRO receiver in this wartime greetings card

"Belgian meteo service for the RAF"—one of the courageous "underground" organizations that sent regular weather reports into England from occupied Belgium by secret hf radio links during the second world war, so helping to reduce RAF losses due to unexpected bad weather

"*Bull*" cartoons showed the desolate amateurs watching as their equipment was trundled off into storage by Post Office officials.

"The Month on the Air" became "The Month off the Air". Members of CWR became the "Early Birds" (Wireless Intelligence Screen) etc. Amateurs were soon to be found in every nook and cranny of the world's first electronic war. Industry adapted quickly; it is said that Ernie Dedman, G2NH, of QCC, more used to supplying crystals to amateurs, found himself one day with an order for millions!

At first, paper remained plentiful and issues substantial. "Khaki and Blue", "Ham Hospitality", active-service lists and similar columns reflected the change from civvies to uniform. For all too many, a "Silent Key" notice or years in the "Kriegies" (POW camps) where more than one amateur participated in the building and operation of secret radios, and for whom C. H. L. Edwards, G8TL, organized an efficient service of gift parcels (not all of which, I suspect, were as innocent as they seemed).

For many, in the tedium that accompanies war, the monthly arrival of the "*Bull*", no matter how thin it became, was a welcome link with the hobby they had left behind—or, increasingly as new members came flooding in after *The Amateur Radio Handbook* became virtually an official Services textbook, a hobby to which they looked forward. Even from thin issues one could learn of the growing importance of frequency modulation and microwaves.

Towards the end of the war, with hostilities ceasing in Europe, one began to hear G7 callsigns on the amateur bands, operated by a small group of well-known British amateurs who spent their time working a strange assortment of stations that often concealed the identities of other amateurs over-anxious to re-engage in a hobby that had been almost silent for so long (never in fact completely silent, since the Germans as part of *their* signals intelligence maintained some D3 and D4 stations on the bands, including a series of beacon stations).

The authorities, however, played fair. Licences with the unrestricted right to call CQ began to be re-issued at the beginning of 1946. My first post-war entry in the log reveals a 28MHz contact with SV1EC in Athens (the operator was Major-General Eric Cole, better known as SU1EC and G2EC, which was the only British two-letter callsign containing an E). It was not long before the first of the new G3-plus-three calls was heard; pre-war holders of figure-two-three-letter "artificial aerial" licences, on passing the morse test, were awarded their G prefix. Now for the first time there was a Radio Amateurs' Examination, though at first many could claim exemption on the grounds of Service qualifications. The terms of the new *amateur* licence had been agreed with the Society during the war.

The shortage of paper and the small 6pt typeface used for many of the pages made the early post-war "*Bulls*" a mere shadow of the fat issues of 1939: yet they included such important reports as those from Atlantic City, where RSGB representatives Stan Lewer, G6LJ, and John Clarricoats, G6CL, succeeded, among other things, in adding the vital footnote to the Radio Regulations that left us with 200kHz of "top band".

Many, better left untold, stratagems were used to obtain extra paper, and for a period an occasional *Proceedings of the RSGB* helped relieve the acute technical starvation of the period. It was the 'fifties before there seemed sufficient space really to reflect the many changes that were fast galloping into amateur radio. But one gem of a series in the late 'forties was "In Your Workshop" by "Donex" (Ken Alford, G2DX, who first held a licence pre-1914 and who must be one of the very few people whose amateur activity already spans more than 60 years).

My own professional connection with the *Bulletin* lasted from 1947 to 1951, though some readers seem to think I am still on the staff! David McIlwain and then John Rouse followed me as assistant editors.

THE SECOND 25 YEARS

To this writer at least, it seems incredible that there have been as many issues since 1950 as there were before; the years appear to have speeded up and one can never hope to do justice to the hundreds of members who have contributed to its columns. Though it is invidious to name names, one remembers Louis Varney's (G5RV) efforts to show us how to build transmitters that radiated fewer harmonics. For undoubtedly the reduction of tvi (and nowadays afi) has remained throughout this period the single most-worrying aspect of amateur radio, and one that affects directly almost all transmitting amateurs: some excellent articles have helped us all.

Then again there has been the consistent encouragement given to vhf and microwave operation—among those who have sat in the seat of vhf reporter was, for a ten-year stint, Fred Lambeth, G2AIW, and, not far short of that number, Jack Hum, G5UM, (who in the early 'thirties had contributed regular notes on 2MHz operation!). It is already some five

years since Dain Evans, G3RPE, began the first monthly microwave column in any amateur journal.

There have been regular columns on ssb, on mobile operation, on amateur television, and currently on Raynet and swl activities. "Month on the air" has proved the longest-running of all regular features. One remembers with gratitude the re-awakening by Dick Thornley, G2DAF, of interest in the home-building of high-performance receivers and ssb transmitters, an early (1951) introduction to switched wide-band exciters by Reg Hammans, G2IG, and some notable contributions by Peter Martin, G3PDM. In a world increasingly dominated by speech there was a memorable account of the morse code and morse keys by J. Piggott, G2PT, in 1956. Then there have been innumerable reports from readers and from overseas technical journals in "Technical topics", which I began with more than a few doubts in 1958, but which has somehow survived 17 years under the same management—from 6ft racks to "table-top" transmitters, transistors, FETS and integrated circuits.

John Rouse, G2AHL, succeeded "Clarry" as editor in 1963 and worked diligently and skilfully to improve the journal until his untimely death in 1967. Trevor Preece, G3TRP, and John Adey valiantly kept the issues coming until the appointment, late in 1969, of our present editor: A. W. Hutchinson. Under his guidance *Radio Communication* has reached a certified ABC figure of 17,816 copies per issue; has topped 100 pages in a single issue; and has maintained consistently high standards of accuracy and detail. Advertising, with the aid of C. C. Lindsay, has for the first time since the earliest days been taken back in-house with outstanding success. Over many years Derek Cole has provided thousands of complex drawings from rough sketches with an expertise and promptness that few other journals could hope to equal.

Behind the scenes for many years has been Roy Stevens, G2BVN, chairman of the Technical & Publications Committee, who has shown how firmly he believes that committees are for *doing*, not just for discussing. It is not always realized that all technical contributions go to referees for evaluation; usually members of the T & P Committee, but often outside specialists. The role of these members in maintaining the high reputation for technical accuracy and judgement should not go unacknowledged. George Jessop, G6JP, has long been associated with the journal and many other RSGB publications.

The *RSGB Bulletin* became *Radio Communication* in January 1968—a change that at first seemed not to appeal to the majority of members. Nowadays, however, and particularly since one began to hear the diminutive "*Rad Comm*", the present title is so well accepted that, at a recent AGM, members were overwhelmingly in favour of its retention.

A society journal is not, of course, just a technical magazine. It must reflect all interests and activities of members. The more amateur radio polarizes or coalesces into factions of specific interest with mode or band rivalries, the more difficult becomes the task of the editor. The man who wants to build a top band rig is not going to seek help from articles on microwave plumbing; a channelized nbfm 144MHz mobile rig has something, but not all that much, in common with an hf ssb transceiver. Again some activities now seem to engender a desire for exclusiveness and the channelling of information into specialized newsletters.

Constructors want constructional articles; buyers want equipment reviews; some want controversy—some wish to avoid it; a local group or society expects to see its activities reported, even though these may be of local interest only; some would like pages of "Your opinion"; almost all readers want pages of ads and small ads. Some want more space given to this or that; others resent any space being given to activities in which they personally are not interested.

The greater diversification of amateur interests, and the growing gaps between them are, I believe, the main reasons why one can look nostalgically at those *Bulletins* of the middle and late 'thirties and feel that they had perhaps more central unity and balance than has generally been achieved in the second 25 years. Compared with 40 years ago, there is these days much less humour, a noticeable absence of sermonizing or policy-stating editorials (and sermons are good for all of us sometimes), less looking towards the future but also less looking back at the lessons of the past. It seems sad that a Society five or six times as large has not been able to keep an annual convention going, as it did so successfully in the 'thirties. Even an annual exhibition is no longer directly linked to the RSGB. The many specialized factions and newsletters are symptoms, not the cause, of this difficult problem. There is a critical size to an amateur radio society above which it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain personal contacts and enthusiasms.

Of course, today it is more streamlined, efficient, cost-effective and professional and few of us would have it otherwise, whether or not we question the idea that "bigger necessarily means better". But I must confess that personally when, for any reason, my belief in the future of the hobby occasionally falters, I find it soonest restored by picking up some old *Bulletins* (thanks to Reg Cole, G6RC, my shelves go back to 1928, some eight years before a 14-year-old schoolboy became hooked on his own copies). That perhaps is the nature of the ageing process. I hope and imagine that in the year 2000 the new members of today will be looking back with similar warmth to Volume 51.

Happy birthday, O journal, and I hope that in your veins of printer's ink you feel 50 years *young*! □

HF BEACON STATIONS

Callsign	Frequency (MHz)	Location	Reports to
DL0IGI	28·195	Mt Predigtstuhl near Salzburg	DJ5DT, Kollowitzweg 1, D 6100 Darmstadt, FR of Germany
GB3SX	28·185	Crowborough, Sussex	G3DME
PY1CK	28·165	Rio de Janeiro	PO Box 1044, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
VE3TEN	28·175	Ottawa	VE3QB, 782 Dunloe Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
VP9BA	28·165	Southampton, Bermuda	VP9BY, PO Box 73, Devonshire, Bermuda
ZL2MHF	28·170	Mt Climie, Wellington	PO Box 40212, Upper Hutt, New Zealand
5B4CY	28·180	Limassol	5B4AP, Box 1267, Limassol, Cyprus
3B8MS	28·190	Signal Mount, Mauritius	MARS, PO Box 13, Curepipe, Mauritius

Reports for any of the above may be sent to RSGB HQ (Attn IBP). At present only DL0IGI switches to 28·200 at 00-05 and 30-35min past each hour.